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Spring 1998, Number 14
James T. Baker, editor

A History ALUMNI Newsletter

Richard *Head of History* Troutman 1972—1998

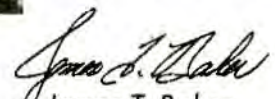
In 1972 Richard Troutman became Head of the History Department at Western. This year he will step down and let someone else take over. I think you will agree with me that an era (lasting a quarter century) is ending.

For this edition of the *Newsletter* I have invited faculty and alumni who have known Dick to send me their comments about what he has meant to them, to the department, and to the university. Mixed with photographs from different periods of his tenure, you can sample some favorite memories and illuminating tributes.

One of my own earliest memories and impressions of Dick goes back to the snowy winter of 1972, when we knew we would be looking for someone to replace Crawford Crowe as Head of History. I watched as Dick



stopped to help a woman faculty member, not from history, whose car was stuck in the old gravel pit parking lot. For half an hour, as she complained and scolded, Dick worked away with a spade, smiling, nodding, saying "Uh huh, uh huh," not listening to a word she said, until he got her out. All that time he had ignored the scolding and complaining and had gone about doing what needed to be done. As she drove away without thanking him, he merely nodded and smiled, his job done. I knew right then that he had what it took to be a successful Head of History.


James T. Baker

Dick:

There are some pretty complicated theories about how to be successful in academic life, but very early in my tenure at Western, I heard Helen Crocker, with Shaker-like simplicity, explain the reason for your success as a department head and a colleague. "Dick takes more pleasure in the success of other people," she said, "than he takes in his own." Over the years, I have repeatedly seen how accurate Helen's remark is. In your work with students, more than most of us, you have been successful in striking that difficult balance between maintaining standards and supporting students. As a department head, you have been fair, decent, and honest with all of us.

In reflecting on the work of George Richard Browder, you wrote, "George Dick believed in sowing bountifully." The rich harvest of respect and affection in these letters suggest that George Dick would say the same about you. I will miss your wise counsel and good example. And I wish you the best in retirement.

Dean David Lee
Potter College

Dr. Troutman:

I cannot imagine going to a Potter College department heads meeting and not seeing you there. You have been an inspiration and model for me as a beginning depart-

ment head and throughout my 11 years at Western. There will be a real loss of presence and dignity with your absence from those meetings.

We in Journalism really appreciated your willingness to lend us classrooms when we have to move out of Gordon Wilson because of someone's inability to climb stairs.

You have been an all around friend to the department, and we wish you the best of everything.

Jo-Ann Albers
Journalism

Dr. Troutman:

As both my History 104 (Civilization to 1500) and Government 110 (American National Government) professor in the Fall of 1967 (my first semester at Western and also yours), you gave me a good and positive start at Western. I have always appreciated your kindness and warm smile over the years and the fact that you still remember me by your always speaking to me whenever I saw you on the second floor of Cherry Hall or on campus or other places. I also am deeply grateful for your recent letter to me congratulating me on my becoming Superintendent of the Russellville Independent School District.

I have also enjoyed reading your book *The Heavens Are Weeping*, which you wrote from journals of a former student of yours and mine about a Methodist minister, who

had lived on the farm right across the road from the farm on which I grew up. This made history come alive to me once again as well as made me aware of the trust and confidence that you inspired in your students.

Marshall
Kemp

Dick:

In 1968, I returned to Western to work half-time as a Staff Assistant in the Graduate College and to be an Instructor for half-time teaching in the History Department. As he did with so many others, Dr. Harrison provided both encouragement and help in starting some historical research, out of which I had a few articles published. Especially because I did not have a terminal degree like the most of the members of the Department, I relished that little bit of publication success, and, no doubt, thought all others should value it as I did. When Helen Crocker, who was a very talented full-time employee whose publication output I judged to be about equal at that point to mine, was submitted for promotion from Instructor to Assistant Professor and I was not, I felt terribly wronged. I moped around feeling sorry for myself. I don't know how you discovered my feelings, but I will never forget that you came to my office in the Graduate College and apologized for what you said had been an oversight. On hindsight, I know that it could have been a justifiable decision made on sound academic grounds, but you couched it as "your" mistake, not "my" inadequacy. I will always appreciate your sensitivity in that regard and hope to recall its value in my dealings with others.

Bill Weaver, Ph.D.

Dr. Troutman:

As a student at Western from 1969-1971 and then from 1976-78, your kindness and encouragement were never forgotten. I was in two of your American History classes (To and From 1865). The first class was so enjoyable and your caring personality so evident that I signed up for your next class. During that spring semester, 1971, my father left my mother soon after the semester started. My mother called me from Cincinnati and said that I might have to leave school because she didn't have the money for me to finish the semester. My fiancé was in Oklahoma for military training and I was so alone during that time. My father did return home and I was able to finish the semester. Obviously you knew something was wrong because you called me aside before final exams and told me if I could make an 85 on my exam, I would pass the class. Your



Inspiring the academic troops

kindness and encouragement saved me... I did pass!!! I married after that semester and was not able to finish my education until several years later. I graduated with a degree in Elementary Education and received my Master's Degree from the University of Louisville in 1982. I have taught since May, 1978, and remember what a kind professor did for me when I had given up. I tell my student teachers that the most important thing you can do for a student is to care for them as a person. Thank you for caring.

Susan Antrim Florence

To All:

I was a History/Government double major at Western from 1981-1984. I was not a typical student in that I was 20 years old and my grades at my first attempt at college were not the best. Dr. Troutman saw the potential in me and after my first semester at school asked me to be a part of the History honors program. It was Dr. Troutman who gave me the encouragement to graduate cum laude from Western.

In 1991 I decided to return to school to obtain a Master's in Latin American Studies at Indiana University. I wrote to Dr. Troutman hoping he would remember me and write me a letter of reference. Again, he came through for me and told me that I was someone he would not forget. He also told me that he thought I belonged in education. Well, could you please pass the word to him that I am teaching 8th grade Social Studies and Spanish. He was right! I love teaching!

Jorge Alberto Garia

To All:

In 1983(?), Dr. Troutman hired me to tutor students, from primarily Western Civilization classes. When I think of how very young I was then, chronologically and intellectually, I cringe! I worked diligently at the task and, hopefully, I helped a few students. I so much wanted to live up to the confidence I felt Dr. Troutman was placing in me. Dr. Troutman would stop by my room in Cherry Hall regularly to find out how things were going and to offer encourage-



With A growing family

ment. I feel this first initial positive experience with "teaching" was a primary influence in my later decision to become an educator.

As tutor, I received few students from Dr. Troutman's classes, and those I did (despite poor grades!) universally sang his praises. They all spoke of his kindness and accessibility to them. In the next breath, they would comment on how unusual this was for a head of a department. This student outreach, this student friendliness, I feel, has been Dr. Troutman's greatest impact. As Head of the History, Dr. Troutman, I believe, set the tone for the entire department. No where on campus could one find a more beloved professor and a more accessible, student-oriented head of a department. Problem with a class...? Go see Troutman. Problem with a paper...? Go see Troutman. The list goes on and on. Some student was constantly in his office asking for something, and Dr. Troutman always was there to help.

Christy Spurlock

To All:

My words of appreciation most certainly go out to Dr. Troutman. Having received my R.N. from Western in 1975, I later decided to complete a B.A. in another field. With the encouragement of Dr. Charles Bussy and with Dr. Drew Harrington as my advisor, I completed my

history degree in 1987. However, this accomplishment was not so easily done as my schedule as a surgical assistant was so erratic and unpredictable that I could not attend classes in the traditional manner. Dr. Troutman, as a department head, worked



Creative in a variety of ways

with me many a semester to allow me to take a number of classes through independent study. For that, I am forever grateful for I could not have completed the course work without his granting me the flexibility of determining my own schedule.

Granted this is probably not the way for most people to obtain a degree but I am confident that, through this arrangement, I obtained a knowledge base and appreciation for history that few others have or, no doubt, will in the future. To this day, my way of relaxing is to read anything that has to do with history.

Heidi Huddleston

Department of History

Western Kentucky University

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History's Coming Events

April 6 Distinguished Lecturer Dan Carter
Garrett Conference Center's Gerard Auditorium
7:30 p.m.

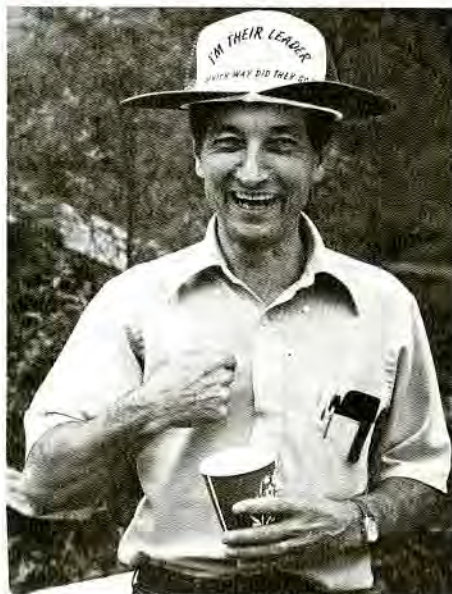
April 17 Phi Alpha Theta Banquet
Speaker: Alumnus Dr. Walter Hixson
For information on time and place call Paula
Trafton at 502-745-3842

April 24 Retirement Reception for Dr. Richard Troutman
Kentucky Building
2:00-4:00 p.m.

May 8 Public Schools History Contest
W.K.U. campus
9:00 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.
For information call Dr. Marion Lucas at
502-745-5736

The Last Word:

Richard "Dick" Troutman--the man and the myth! When someone mentions Dr. Troutman, the veteran head of the History Department, many images appear. "He eats candy when he acts like he doesn't like it." "He has really cool puzzles on his wall." "Can't remember your name but you look just like a jockey and I've won a lot of money on you." "We usually get along because I am shorter." "He is never jealous of others' success." "Picky over things like 2-point jokes but a brick over ruined chafing dishes." "He has strong opinions about punctuality, test schedules, and classes



meeting for the full time--even before holidays." "Paternalistic, generous, stubborn, unreasonable, fair, too conservative, etc., etc."

After more years than I like to admit-- I was one and he was thirteen when first we met-- I can truthfully say that I consider myself fortunate to have worked with and for Dick Troutman during his tenure at Western. We obviously have not always agreed, but that is one of the beauties of the university environment. The ability to question, disagree, tolerate, and cooperate despite differences of opinions in a congenial atmosphere is the Troutman legacy to Cherry Hall.

Carol Crowe Carraco